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HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

THE production of *Dinorah* has been the means of introducing Madlle. Irma de Murska in a part eminently calculated for her. The character of the half-witted peasant girl seems to have been deeply studied by Madlle. De Murska, not only vocally but histrionically; and the result is an elaborate realization of Meyerbeer's heroine, which most effectually wins the sympathies of the audience. Her "Shadow-song" is not only well sung, but full of picturesque effect; and in many parts of the Opera her peculiarities—for, although an accomplished singer, she has peculiarities—seem rather to aid, than detract from, the merit of her performance. Mozart's *Il Flauto Magico* and Weber's *Oberon* have also been amongst the most successful of the revivals; and Signor Mongini, as *Sir Huon* in the last-named Opera, has achieved a new triumph. In our next number we hope to speak of Mozart's *Il Seraglio*, another neglected Opera, for the production of which Mr. Mapleson deserves the thanks of all who love real art.

ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA.

THE season has been extremely busy at this establishment, but new works—or even works new to this country—seem quite unnecessary, as the subscribers and the public never seem to tire of hearing their favourite singers in their favourite operas. Madame Vilda has thoroughly taken her place as one of the most accomplished vocalists of the day; and Madame Lemmens-Sherrington seems to have established as firm a footing on the operatic stage as she had previously done in the Concert-room. *Don Giovanni* has been immensely attractive, the *Elvira* of Madame Lemmens-Sherrington being a new and welcome feature in the cast, and the *Don Giovanni* of M. Faure as genuine a representation of the true intention of Mozart as can be imagined. *Fra Diavolo* has also been one of the great hits of the season, the *Zerlina* of Madlle. Pauline Lucca delighting every one by its charming freshness and piquancy. Nothing new can be said of Madlle. Adelina Patti, who is always received with the enthusiasm due to so established a favourite.

M. GOUNOD'S "ULYSSE."

WHETHER a Gounod evening can attract a London audience without the additional stimulus of its being in aid of a charity remains still an open question. Certain it is that through this medium many of the important works of this composer have been performed for the first time; and although the room has been usually well filled with a fashionable company, it is difficult to say how far the purchasers of tickets have been influenced by the love of Gounod's works, and how far by the laudable desire of benefiting the funds of a hospital. The Drama of *Ulysses* (from the French of M. Ponsard), as read before an unusually attentive audience at St. James's Hall, on the 8th ult., was a great mistake, even had the music of M. Gounod been equal in merit to the *Athalie* of Mendelssohn. Four long acts of undramatic poetry could not be redeemed from the effect of weariness, in spite of the intellectual and clear recitation of Miss Helen Faucit, who did all she possibly could to struggle against the depressing influence of a drama utterly destitute of human interest. Enthusiasm for what is good in the works of M. Gounod should not lead us to find apologies for what is bad; and as we hold that a composer who is conscientious (as Mendelssohn was, and as all great men ought to be), must be responsible for his choice of subject, we see no reason to qualify our verdict that *Ulysses*, in a musical point of view, is a failure. Critically examining the various pieces which illustrate this exceedingly uninteresting drama, there can be no question that undoubted proof of that power which has been so successfully shown in *Faust* and *Le Médecin Malgré lui*, is to be found in detached portions of many of the choruses; but the genius that can form from the given materials an earnest and perfect work is given but to few of those whose ambition, as in the case of M. Gounod, is ever tempting them beyond their real strength. These truths should be fearlessly spoken by all who hold that high art should be respected; for it is difficult (nay, impossible) for a man to measure his own intellect where the study of a mind superior to his own produces rather the restless desire of imitation than the calm feeling of veneration.

The most noticeable points in the music of *Ulysses* are the choruses of False Handmaidens, the first especially having a delicate and fanciful subject which prepared the audience to expect better music than followed. With M. Gounod's devices on a ground-bass we confess to have become somewhat wearied; and the solo with chorus which is evidently intended to be instinct with dramatic vigour, produced little or no effect, and indeed was merely tolerated as one more instance of a mannerism more curious than pleasing. There is much good writing in some of the choruses of Herdsmen, the bold and well-marked subjects aptly expressing the words; but in these, as in many of the other pieces, the most successful are those where the least is attempted; wherever points of imitation are introduced the want of sustained power is sensibly felt, and precisely, therefore, where genius throws out its true strength, we feel an almost indescribable sensation of disappointment and vexation. We have already spoken of the able manner in which Miss Helen Faucit read the drama, which has been fairly translated by Mr. Farnie, but we cannot bestow the same unqualified praise upon the general execution of the choruses. Either the forces under Signor Randegger's direction were strangers to him, or they had not had a sufficient number of rehearsals, for certainly they were often unsteady, and not unfrequently out of tune. The principal vocalists were Madame Rudersdorff, Miss Julia Elton, Mr. W. H. Cummings, Mr. Fred. Walker, Mr. Lawler, and Mr. Weiss. The room was well attended; and we trust that M. Gounod's music,

if it do not enrich the art, may at least enrich the funds of that excellent charity the Hospital for Consumption, for the benefit of which the performance was specially organized.

MUSICAL SOCIETY.

THE fourth and last Concert of this Society took place on the 13th ult., when Schumann's Symphony in E flat, already becoming familiar to those who will not persistently shut their ears to the music of young Germany, formed the principal orchestral work. The clear writing throughout this symphony, especially in the second movement, which is based upon a charming subject, most artistically treated and wrought out with consummate skill, should silence all who love to dwell upon the vague and fragmentary nature of Schumann's compositions. The first movement is also winning, both in the principal theme, and in its skilful instrumentation, which is always rich, without being forced into an artificial piquancy, which too often results in mere obscurity. The finale is scarcely so much to our taste; and indeed it is here that the weak point of most modern composers is too often shown. The last movement of a symphony, like the last act of a play, tests the power of construction, so that few indeed pass the ordeal successfully. Were it not so, that mere creative faculty which enables a composer to string together a number of pleasing themes and passages, or an author to throw off a succession of lively scenes and incidents, would produce us composers and authors by the hundred, worthy to rank with the glorious names of those who have raised music and the drama to their present state of excellence. Such exceptional genius, however, is necessarily limited; but it behoves those who write on art, and love their work for its own sake, to labour earnestly and zealously for the enforcement of the principle that all who desire to enter their names as candidates for artistic honours should be entitled at least to a fair and impartial hearing.

A welcome item in the programme of this concert was Sterndale Bennett's sparkling and fanciful overture, *The Naiads*, a work which, although written when quite a youthful student in the Royal Academy of Music, stands in our opinion as one of the very best of his orchestral compositions, even in the present day. M. Wieniawski's performance of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto was a great improvement on anything we have yet heard him play in the classical school. His tone is good, and his execution bold and free, even in the many exacting passages with which this composition abounds. The last movement, however, was taken at a pace which the orchestra could scarcely keep up with, and a great portion of the delicacy of the theme was consequently lost. Madame Ada Wienans sang Mozart's "Non più di fiori" in a manner so utterly at variance with the intention of the composer, as to make Mr. Lazarus's delicious *Corno di bassetto obbligato* doubly welcome; and Mr. Tom Hohler gave Donizetti's "Una furtiva lagrima" in his usual exaggerated style.

MR. W. G. CUSINS gave his Annual Morning Concert on the 8th ult. at the Hanover-square Rooms, when he performed for the first time his Pianoforte Concerto in A minor, and also played Liszt's brilliant and showy Fantasia on *Lucia*. From a professor so well known as an exponent of classical music, we should have preferred a programme with less vocal and more instrumental music, especially as having secured the services of Herr Ludwig Strauss for the Violin, and Signor Piatto for the Violoncello, so many of the sterling works for these instruments, in combination with the Pianoforte, were at his command. As a contrast of styles, however, Mr. Cusins was happy in his selection of the pieces mentioned, since, educated in the legitimate school of writing, his own concerto is marked by an artistic feeling only to be acquired by a reverential study of the great masters. The second movement, and the dashing Tarantella for the Finale displayed both composer and executant to the utmost advantage. The principal vocalists were Miss Mathilde Baurnmeister, the Mdles. Georgi, Miss Louisa Pyne, Miss Ida Gillies, Miss Messent, Mdle. Liebhart, Miss Robertine Henderson, Mr. Whiffin, Signor Gardoni, and Mr. Santley. Mr. Harold Thomas's new and effective Song, "Gallant so gay," (well sung by Miss Henderson), and Mr. Sullivan's Duet, "How sweet the moonlight sleeps," (the only good piece of writing in his Cantata *Kenilworth*), excellently given by Miss Henderson and Mr. Whiffin, were the most prominent points in the vocal selection. There was a good orchestra, and the violin and violoncello solos of Herr Ludwig Strauss and Signor Piatto received the attention and applause which such artistic performances always command.

THE "Ballad Concert" of Mr. W. T. Wrighton, which took place at the Hanover-square Rooms on the 7th ult., is scarcely one which calls for critical remark from a musical journal, since it is to the mere ballad lovers he appeals, and the applause which greeted his efforts is the surest proof that he has worked to their satisfaction. In the "Home song," "Her bright smile haunts me still," and "They tell me I am quite forgot," (which, by the way, they should at least do in good English), there could be little doubt that the popular taste had been fitted to a nicety; and their effect was much heightened by the excellent manner in which they were sung by the concert-giver himself and Madame Parepa. Miss Edith Wynne, Madame Berger-Lascelles, and Mr. Weiss, were also included amongst the vocalists; and the instrumental portion of the concert was entirely sustained by Herr Immanuel Liebh, who performed two solos of his own composition on the pianoforte.

THE St. James's Glee Union gave an Evening Concert on the 4th ult., at the Marylebone Institution, when they